

The Human Side

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES □ SPRING 2002

The mission of the Georgia Department of Human Resources is to assist Georgians in achieving healthy, independent and self-sufficient lives.

Faith community helps DHR promote adoption

The faith community has joined forces with the Office of Adoptions in sponsoring gospel fests, prayer breakfasts and adoption fairs to help about 280 children in the state's custody find homes.

The Office of Adoptions held a

ministerial prayer breakfast recently for 14 congregations in Valdosta.

They discussed the need for permanent homes for children waiting for adoption and what churches can do.

"We want to see our local churches more involved in our recruitment efforts," said **Barbara**

Williams, a regional adoption coordinator for the Valdosta area.

"Where children are concerned, the mission of the faith community is not that different from ours.

Churches have always been supportive of our mission to make sure our children have the safe homes and loving families they need."

Churches in the Atlanta, Savannah, Columbus and Athens areas have committed to promoting adoption through the One Church, One Child (OCOC) program.

Father George Clements of Chicago founded OCOC in 1980. The program is based on the idea that if every church could identify a family in their congregation who would adopt one child from foster care, we would not have waiting children, according to **G. Danny Stevens**, a regional adoption coordinator for the Athens area. Athens started an OCOC program in November 2000. It now has over 50

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Volunteers for the Friends of Kids in Foster Care program helped children make these art objects from gourds. (l-r) Standing: Jean Cook, Claire Moore, Cindy Peterson, Marianne Nichols, Kelley Guinn, DFCS Social Services Consultant Michael Cohen and Vickie Hall; seated: Dr. G. Gil Watson, senior minister, Northside United Methodist Church.

Making friends with foster kids

Friends of Kids in Foster Care is a new effort by churches and synagogues to provide adult friendship and fun activities for children, sponsored by the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

Volunteers at Northside United Methodist Church and Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta have already been trained to give supervised one-on-one attention to foster children ages 8 to 12. They spend Thursday afternoons teaching the children board games, arts and crafts, and other enjoyable activities that can raise the children's self-esteem. This also gives the foster parents and other caregivers a break.

"We are trying to help the children feel good about themselves and offer them a special time for fun. We want the volunteers to serve as positive role models and help build relationships with the kids," said **Michael**

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Commissioner's Corner

I hear you

Since becoming Commissioner of DHR, I have been trying to give you information that will let you know what is going on and help you do your job.

But, I also need to hear from you, so that I too can do the best possible job.

I welcome information and suggestions from all DHR staff to help me run the department and meet the health and human service needs of Georgia's citizens.

To do this, I have started a listening post called "I Hear You." I know that DHR employees know a lot of things and have a lot of good



ideas that I can not get anywhere else. I would like to know about special projects and programs; exceptional work that's being done; and achievements that are helping

us reach our goals as a department. I would like to hear about innovative ideas that can cut costs and make our work more productive.

I am inviting you to send your information and ideas to "I Hear You" in writing or by email. Please let me know how we can improve our services, help our programs work better together, and help staff work better together. What you send me should involve the work of the department, not your personal situation. I know your personal issues affect your job, but there are other ways to address them. On the "I Hear You" web site please share the information and ideas that we all can use.

The email address for "I Hear You" is jmartin@ihearyou.info. The web page is www.ihearyou.info. If you do not have email, write to me, Commissioner Jim Martin, 29.250, Two Peachtree St. NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142.

Jim Martin



(l-r) *Jim Martin, DHR commissioner; Myrtle Habersham, regional commissioner, Social Security Administration; Juanita Blount-Clark, director, DFCS; Carlis Williams, director, Southeast Hub, Federal Administration for Children and Families.*

DHR links up

The Georgia Link Project, a collaboration among DFCS, the Southeast Regional Hub of the Federal Administration for Children and Families and the Atlanta region of the Social Security Administration, was formalized with a signing ceremony during the February meeting of the Board of Human Resources.

The project's goal is to identify Temporary Assistance to Needy Families recipients who may be eligible for benefits through the Social Security Administration and to help them overcome common obstacles to receiving benefits, such as transportation needs, child care, and illiteracy. Since the program began in September, 170 people have been helped.

Public employee recognition week will be celebrated in Georgia May 6 through 10, 2002. Awards will be given for outstanding service and dedication in these categories: Customer Service, Community Service, Innovations/Suggestions, Safety, Heroism, Teamwork, Leadership and Faithful Service. Recognition ceremonies are planned both for DHR and for the state as a whole.

While DHR managers appreciate employees all year round, this week will present a special opportunity to say "thank you" for all that you do on behalf of the the department and the citizens of Georgia. The next Human Side will bring you a full report.

Giving MHMRSA consumers a future

Certified peer specialist training

What happens when you combine a mental health system that believes in recovery; a proactive statewide consumer network; the guarantee of Medicaid to reimburse services wherever consumers are; and a federal grant to support statewide consumer training? You get MHMRSA's certified peer specialist program — the first of its kind in the country.

Consumers with mental illnesses who wanted to become certified peer specialists began training in October 2001. They learned about the role of self-determination in recovery and how to create empowerment and break down stigma.

Central to their training was peer support in the mental health system. Last March, the first class of 23 consumers became certified peer specialists. They went on to work in state hospitals, in peer centers and on community support teams, as counselors, mentors and job coaches. They provide role models by sharing their experiences as survivors of mental illness with those who are just starting recovery.

One of the first certified peer specialists, Janet Reasons, who works at Community Friendship (CFI) in Atlanta, feels the training she received gave her confidence. "I learned I have something to offer — my illness has been turned into a way I can do good for others as well as myself."

After going through nine surgeries in ten years, having countless physical problems and being medicated extensively, Reasons had experienced delusions and slid into a deep depression in the 1980's. Her family enrolled her in one of CFI's

programs. Later, as she recovered, she joined the staff as a part-time activity coordinator. In January 2002, Reasons facilitated her first group at CFI.

"My short-term goal is to get folks to create a plan for recovery. The plan helps consumers know what their triggers are, develop a daily maintenance plan, prevent crises, and express their wishes if a crisis occurs. This respects the individual's choices. It is the ultimate

tool of empowerment and helps significantly in a person's recovery. It would be useful for anyone to develop for themselves."

Reasons' ten-year plan involves getting a degree in counseling — assisting those who can't see the hands reaching out to them to help. "I am no longer ashamed of my past; I know my past is valuable, especially in terms of what I can now give others through my peer counseling. Now I have a future."

— Iris McIlvaine

Public Health nurses help form disaster aid network

Public Health is working with four other organizations to make sure that if a disaster hits, nurses will be ready to help. They have formed the Georgia Nurse Alert System (GNAS), to recruit volunteer nurses to serve on the state's emergency response team.

GNAS will be called into action if there is a statewide mass vaccination campaign, a need to treat victims of terrorism, or in response to a natural disaster such as a hurricane. The volunteers may serve in their own communities or travel to another part of the state.

One of their most important jobs will be to help staff shelters, including some for people with special needs who do not need to be in a hospital but are not well enough to be in shelters for the general public. GNAS maintains a register to help match the nurses' skills with each shelter's needs.

Staffing shelters can be complicated. People with special needs may require skilled nursing and personal

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Nurses ready

Larry Ethridge, chair, Baker County Board of Health and Juneile Rhodes, R.N., director, Baker County Health Department take a break. The tent served as temporary headquarters while the health department building was flooded in 1994. Mental health services and a primary care center also used the tent. In 1998 a storm again rendered the health department building unusable, but clinics were held in an elementary school gym.

New guide helps men stay healthy

Last summer the Division of Public Health (PH) reported that men in Georgia are living longer than ever before, but they still die nearly seven years younger than women. Now, a guidebook is available to help men stay well.

“Our earlier report took a look at men’s health problems in Georgia and suggested ways health agencies and communities could help increase men’s access to preventive care. The new guidebook empowers individual men to take charge of their own health,” says **Sean Johnson**, Men’s Health Initiative coordinator for PH.

The *2000 Report on the Status of Men’s Health in Georgia: A Picture of Men’s Health and Well-Being*, suggested possible reasons for men’s lower life expectancy: behavior choices that affect men’s health; less use of and access to health care; and pressure to live up to society’s



expectations for men. The new *Health Guide for Georgia Men* offers information to help men make better choices and pay more attention to their health.

The handy 39-page booklet gives basic advice on how to eat right, stay fit, avoid injury and disease, and deal with mental and emotional problems. One section consists of forms to help the owner keep track of his own

health history, such as screenings, immunizations, medical procedures, medication, allergies and doctors’ names.

The new publication is the first guide to men’s health and wellness produced by any state agency. It was released in March by the legislature’s Commission on Men’s Health, in collaboration with PH and the Department of Community Health. The three organizations are distributing the guide statewide through civic organizations, health providers (including county health departments), and businesses.

For a copy of the *Health Guide for Georgia Men* or the *2000 Report on the Status of Men’s Health in Georgia*, contact Sean Johnson at 404-651-7441. The 2000 Report is available on the Internet at <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/women/pdfs/menshealth00.pdf>.

— Barbara Joye

Georgians get help with home heating bills

DHR’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) spent \$22.2 million last winter to help low-income Georgians with their heating bills. The program started in November and ended in March. An estimated 92,000 families received help, including clients whose heat had been turned off.

“There were new challenges facing the program this past winter,” said **Joyce B. Hull**, state LIHEAP coordinator. “The high price of home energy and the amount of old and new debt on consumers created problems, especially for low income

people. To address the problem, we formed new partnerships and we adopted LIHEAP procedures to meet the needs of our most vulnerable — the elderly, disabled and young children.”

Qualified applicants received \$158 to \$400 to reduce their heating bill. LIHEAP made the payments directly to the home energy supplier for gas, electricity, wood, coal or kerosene.

Participants’ income had to be

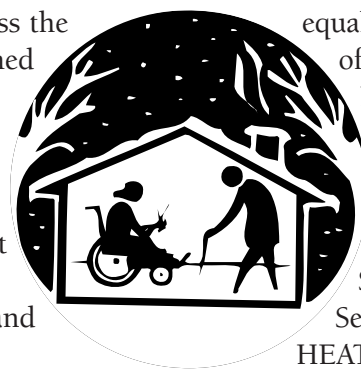
equal to or less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

For a one-person household, it was \$12,885 and for eight persons, \$44,595.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Georgia Public Service Commission and HEAT, Inc., a non-profit fuel entity, funded the program. The money was distributed by community action agencies.

For more information about LIHEAP, call 404-657-3426 or 404-657-3427.

—Edna Jackson



At home after Brook Run

In 1997, Joy Shepard was more than a little dubious about the fact that her son, Al, would soon move from Brook Run, an institution for people with mental retardation that DHR planned to close down. She even went to the Capitol to protest the closure. She was okay with his care at Brook Run, and since Al has autism and mental retardation, she was concerned he would not be able to do well in the community.

Joy worried about Al's ability to cope in a group home, where he might not be able to get enough time alone. He'd had some behavior problems and had been sent by court order to Brook Run, where he had lived for 15 years.

When the state finally closed Brook Run, Joy had to find a community provider. She chose a provider whom she termed "not bad," and Al moved in with his two roommates from Brook Run. Unfortunately, a third resident in the new home had behavior problems and destroyed property. Al's service monitor, Cobb ARC, found another provider in the same area.

Meanwhile, George Powell, who had 17 years of experience with caregiving and had known and liked the men when they were with their old provider, happily agreed to become a caregiver for Your Friends and Neighbors, the new provider, so he could be with them. Joy helped select, furnish and decorate the house.

Al and his two roommates moved to a new split-level home in Kennesaw. Al lives on the bottom floor. He has a sitting room, a bedroom and a private bath, so he gets



Joy Shepard and her son Al at his home.

quiet and privacy when he needs them. The home has wall-to-wall carpeting, plants galore, a pet bird, pictures of the men on their various community adventures, a covered porch on which to sit when it's warm — all the comforts of home. When Al is not in his day program, he is out with George and the guys, shopping and enjoying the neighborhood.

George considers "his guys" his friends. "I think this place works because I don't consider this situation merely a job. And I am a neurotic old rooster; I want their environment to be clean. I want them to have a real home. It's a sign of respect for the guys." This even extends to haircuts. George gave one of the men a buzz cut. "It was his choice," said George.

Has Joy regretted community as a decision for Al? No.

"Looking back on the transition I can see now that Al wasn't really disabled enough to be in the institution and I am delighted that he fits into the community." She has noticed Al is calmer, happy, more settled. She takes him home every other weekend and says he never has behavior problems. "I used to cry all the way home when I left Al after a visit to Brook Run. Now I know I don't have to worry."

— Iris McIlvaine

Employees make charitable donations in spite of stressful times

State employees were cheerful givers as America united to aid many needy families. Donations for the 2002 State Charitable Contributions Campaign amounted to \$245,925, with 3,375 employees participating, compared to \$297,508 from 4,511 givers the previous year.

"Many people opted to make donations directly to charities helping the victims and families of the September 11 attack rather than to local charities. Plus, the economy took a downturn last fall," said Robert Riddle, director of the Office of Child Support Enforcement and DHR's chairperson for the 2002 State Charitable Contributions Campaign. "However, we hope to return to increasing donations next year because the need has increased."

The highlight of the campaign was the charitable contributions festival at Two Peachtree Street in Atlanta last October 31, which raised over \$4,300, according to Riddle.

— Edna Jackson

Faith helps

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churches from different denominations committed to promoting adoption.

World Changers Ministries in Fulton and Hopewell Baptist Church in Gwinnett have hosted several adoption fairs. In Muscogee County, a gospel singer recently performed a concert highlighting the need for foster and adoptive families.

Chatham County DFCS and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance (IMA) held a gospel fest in November to celebrate 20 years of placing children. Through their partnership with IMA and OCOC they have been able to place many children, said Carmelita S. Maynard, a DFCS social services specialist.

This program has been successful in Illinois; Washington, D.C.; and Georgia. However, more adoptive homes are still needed in Georgia. If your church or congregation would like to help find homes for Georgia's waiting children, call 1-888-460-2467.

— Edna Jackson

Friends

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Cohen, a DFCS social services consultant and director of the program.

"One foster child was interested in science. One of the volunteers who shared that interest gave her books on the topic. The children look forward to these sessions and taking home the crafts they make."

DFCS is expanding the program into DeKalb County. Religious groups interested in participating should be able to provide space for activities and snacks. For more information, call Michael Cohen at 404-463-7285.

— Edna Jackson

Write it right – Writing for the web

Writing readable text for a web page takes more than just following good writing guidelines. The World Wide Web is a new medium with its own way of presenting information.

Studies have shown that web site visitors scan text, instead of trying to read each word on the screen. That's why the ideas you want to communicate on your web page should be easy to pick out. The color, size and placement of words on a site are a part of web grammar.

Like television, computer screens are low in resolution, which makes them hard to read. Readability of text on a computer screen is a measure of how well the words can be scanned for the information the user is looking for. Of course you still want to keep sentences short and to the point, use the active voice, and stick to one main idea for each paragraph. But here are text presentation guidelines that will help you make your web pages more effective.

- To make your text easy to scan, use bullets or numbered lists, and highlight words in bold-face or color. Use short paragraphs. Use short, to-the-point headlines, and occasionally add subheads in a slightly smaller size. Do not force your main body text to a smaller size by using a

"minus" HTML font tag. Users will have to zoom the text out to read it, or may decide it's not worth the trouble and go to another web site.

- Use hypertext, that is, links to split your information into easily digested pieces. With hypertext you can take web page visitors to another web page, or to another

part of the original web page. The idea is to give users the choice to get additional information, or to go deeper into a particular topic by clicking.

- Generally, do not put long scrolling pages on your web site. But if you have to because of the nature of the material, give users the option of getting back to the top of the page or to another web page, with links within the text, such as a "back to top" link between long entries.

- Protect your credibility and avoid self-promotion. Because web page visitors often do not know the source of information on a web site, they will question the site's truthfulness if promotional language is used. Be objective. Stick to the facts.

- Also affecting web page credibility is web page design. A well-organized, attractive page instills confidence in the web publisher. Another way to enhance credibility is to use links that take visitors to topic-related, external web sites.

— Angel Rodriguez



Who's news

Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) Commissioner Jim Martin has appointed **Jack H. Senterfitt** as chief legal officer and assistant commissioner.



Senterfitt, a partner with the law firm of Alston & Bird since 1980, is a member of the Alternative Dispute Resolution, Litigation and Family Law Sections of the Atlanta Bar Association and State Bar of Georgia. He is also certified in mediation and arbitration training. Senterfitt is a graduate of Vanderbilt University School of Law and Florida Presbyterian College (now Eckerd College). His community service includes: vice chair, board of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity; AID Atlanta; Project Open Hand; and the Georgia Equality Project.

The new chief legal officer is married to Trisha Lyons Senterfitt,

associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta. They have three adult children.



Deborah Burrus is DHR's new adoption recruitment manager. She will oversee development of recruitment materials statewide and assist county and regional offices of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) with their annual recruitment plans. She will also serve as spokesperson for the Office of Adoptions.

Burrus has more than 10 years of child welfare experience. She recently served as regional adoption coordinator for DFCS Region 9. Before coming to DHR, she worked for the Texas public welfare agency. She earned a bachelor's degree in human resources management from Auburn University.



The Division of Public Health's Family Health Branch and Office of Injury Prevention received

a certificate of appreciation from SAFE KIDS of Georgia in February. The Family Health Branch used Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds to purchase safety seats, bike helmets and safety pads to be distributed by local SAFE KIDS coalitions.

In addition, SAFE KIDS coalitions led by three county health departments were honored: Fayette County SAFE KIDS, Fayette County Health Department, received the Above and Beyond Award; SAFE KIDS of Columbus, Muscogee County Health Department, received the Joy E. Maxey Lead Agency Award; and SAFE KIDS of Savannah, Chatham County Health Department, was named the Program of the Year.

SAFE KIDS of Georgia is a non-profit organization of local coalitions throughout the state that helps parents, caregivers and children prevent the number one killer of children: unintentional injuries.



contributions, the poster includes the stories of 15 African Americans who were pioneers in fields related to DHR's mission.

Tony Flores, DHR's director for consumer outreach, **Lola Scott Russell**, public relations and information manager (OC), and **Eddie Reddick**, graphic designer, Printing and Multi-Media Services (OC), collaborated on the production. You can download it from the DHR web page. A limited number of copies may still be available; call the OC: 404/656-4937.

"Black heroes in health and social services," DHR's first Black History Month poster, was produced and distributed in February by the Office of Communications (OC). In addition to a colorful collage of images symbolizing their

PH nurses

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care. For example, some may have a disability requiring help with daily living tasks such as bathing and eating. Others may need monitoring for diabetes, have a history of epileptic seizures, use a urinary catheter, or need tube feeding.

PH has been working with the Red Cross and other groups on ways to strengthen shelter staffing since tropical storm Alberto caused floods in 1994. The GNAS member organizations include the American Red Cross, the Georgia Board of Nursing, DHR, the Georgia Nurses Association (GNA) and the Georgia Nurses Foundation. The Red Cross will offer the volunteer nurses disaster training. When a disaster strikes, DHR will notify GNA, which will send a message to the volunteers.

For more information or to volunteer: www.georgianurses.org/gnas.

— Carole Robinson and Barbara Joye

What's news



(l-r) Wayne E. Kerr; Alan Sievert, M.D., Gwinnett/Rockdale/Newton public health district director; Linda Costly, past president, Lakeview Hispanic Initiative; and Norman Wheeler, Rockdale County commissioner, cut the ribbon at a new WIC clinic housed in the Wayne E. Kerr Family Health Center.

A special Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinic with bilingual staff now serves the 3,800 mostly Spanish-speaking residents of Lakeview, a mobile home park in Conyers. The clinic opened in March in a new annex of the Wayne E. Kerr Family Health Center, a private, non-profit clinic next to the community, which serves people who have no health insurance. Most Lakeview residents have no transportation, so in the past they had to walk six miles or take taxis to the Rockdale County Health Department in order to receive WIC food vouchers and nutrition education services.

Alan Sievert, M.D., Gwinnett/Rockdale/Newton district health director, says the district is very fortunate to have received a federal grant for the site, and adds: "This is another example of how public health and the private sector can work together to improve people's health and wellbeing."

Alwin Peterson, WIC director, and Tony Flores, DHR's director of consumer outreach, helped the district and the Rockdale County WIC program establish their collaboration with the Kerr center and the Lakeview Hispanic Initiative, which represents the residents.



Caregiving in Georgia has been published by the Georgia Caregiver Resource Center (GCRC). Based on a series of focus group meetings with professional and family caregivers from across the state, the report's findings have already led to several initiatives to improve quality of care. Kathy Scott, president of Programs Assisting Community Elderly Inc., wrote the report with help from the Division of Aging Services and the AARP. *Caregiving in Georgia* can be downloaded from the Division's website at: www.2state.ga.us/departments/dhr/aging.html. The GCRC, a program of the Division of Aging Services, provides education and training about Alzheimer's disease.



We are updating the Human Side distribution system, but we don't have all the bugs out yet. If your office didn't get the right number of copies, please call Barbara Joye or Mary Price at 404/656-4937 or email Barbara Joye at brjoye@dhr.state.ga.us. Anyone with access to the Internet can also read the Human Side on the DHR web site: www.dhr.state.ga.us.



Charles H. Roszel, DDS, Northwest (Rome) Health District dental director, shows two elementary school children the district's new mobile dental health trailer. Six such trailers are already bringing oral health services to children in the Rome, LaGrange, Dublin, Macon, and Augusta (2) districts. By the end of the school year, dental trailers will be on the road in the Clayton and Valdosta districts. Fulton County has operated dental vans since 1996.

These vehicles, staffed by public health dentists, dental hygienists and dental assistants, bring preventive services to schools with large numbers of low income children and children who do not have a private dentist, have no dental insurance, and have little or no access to dental services, mostly in rural areas. They provide exams, cleaning, dental sealants, fillings, crowns, minor nerve treatments, and extractions. Priority is for children with emergency needs.



The purpose of *The Human Side* is to provide interesting and important information related to DHR employees and their jobs.

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